1:Sanders Z-5)4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

The Bishop of Messenia and His Good Works

793 794 [346] The contrast between an ordinary priest's home and the bishop's palace in Kalamata is quite marked, for the latter was once the ornate building housing the local branch of the Bank of Greece. But the bishop's interest in the people of his diocese, both the city dwellers in Kalamata and the farmers in the surrounding villages, equaled that of any priest for his parishioners. The bishop, when visited in 1953, proved a friendly, jovial person, with an iron-gray beard, a dignified though rotund figure, and a very forward-looking social philosophy. It was this latter quality in particular that had made me seek him out after hearing from friends in Athens of his unusual achievements in the welfare field.

He began to talk about what he had done and hoped to do for his people: "I became interested when I saw their great needs, for, as a church leader, I am responsible for the welfare of whatever people are under me." But before he started on any specific projects after his arrival in this diocese, he had thought it best, as he phrased it, "to put myself at the disposal of the people." He gradually gained the confidence of the members of his diocese by making available to them for local use all of the church's funds derived from festivals. The people began to realize that this bishop was interested in them. Later on, when he began asking them to support the various projects which he started, they gladly cooperated.

793 747 His first project was a day nursery, which takes care of one hundred and twenty children whose mothers are at work, started in 1947. Visiting this nursery in the afternoon when all of the children had gone home, we noted the cleanliness and the simple but adequate facilities. The success of this nursery prompted the bishop to start another one in Mycenae for one hundred children in 1948.

736 793 848 [597] [847] One perplexing problem was that of illegitimate children. In many cases the mother would kill such a child or leave it with people who exploited it unmercifully. So he started a home for these children in 1947. Since then, two hundred and fifty children have gone through the home, sixty of them have been adopted and fifty were there then. The equipment was simple and bare, but everything was spotless. When we entered, the children came up to the bishop with great pleasure, for he is a favorite with the young children. One of the nurses told us: "When we have a child that is lonesome, who won't eat, we ask the bishop to come feed the child. When he comes, the child always eats."

793 736 [597] [657] The bishop noticed, however, that many of the boy foundlings, but relatively few of the girl foundlings, would be adopted. The boys who were not taken by foster parents by their fifth or sixth year would go into the National Boys' Orphanage of Kalamata, largely supported by the state, which had one hundred and fifty boys in 1953. Something had to be done for the girls.

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

783 788 because the mere act of bringing whatever they had to contribute gave them an emotional uplift.

793 But still we had not seen the end of the bishop's good works. In 1949 he had organized a home for the aged where seventy elderly people live in [737] relative comfort. The most ambitious project of all, however, was a poly- [874] technic school started for the youth of the area. He had already spent about [177] $37,000 on the first floor alone. The school had opened the previous November (1952) and already had two hundred pupils. Here was an institution that the Marshall Plan had helped. The school bore the name Papaflessa, in honor of one of the Greek patriots of the war of independence. While looking over this school we also learned about one more activity, a hospital of one hundred and fifty beds whose foundation had just recently been laid by the bishop and his coworkers.

793 794 The financing of even one of these undertakings, not to say the whole complement of institutions, would be a staggering task in any country, especially in one as poorly endowed as Greece. Although the bishop never ●657 confided the secret of his success, I heard from others that skillful diplomacy had stood him in good stead. He would start with a certain amount that he could take from his bishop's fund; he would then go to Athens and persuade the people in the Welfare Ministry that local people would match the funds of the central government if it would contribute; then, back home, he would call together the leading businessmen and say that he could get so much from the central government if they would put up such-and-such an amount. Since all parties did their share, he was able to get the necessary money for capital expenditures.

793 794 For the operation of these institutions, and their total number of inmates or patients is considerable, he draws upon other resources. Some of the people in his diocese upon death will to some specified institution their [428] homes, olive groves, or money. Instead of having an expensive memorial [769] service, with several priests, for a dead relative at the stated periods required by the church, the people are having simple memorial services and giving the difference in what they would pay to an institution; instead of buying expensive wreaths, they are giving the money to the foundling home, the sanatorium, or perhaps the old people's home. The bishop, too, has organized the rural parishes so that each parish turns over olive oil, meat, cheese, and eggs to a person who collects this produce and distributes it to the institution. Or, as already mentioned, some of the people want to bring their contributions in person. Many are asked to donate labor: one builds a door, another puts in windows, and everybody has a sense of participating.

Visiting the bishop raised many questions in my mind about all that I had learned in America about modern child-welfare practices, care of the [748] aged, and the like. Social work as a profession is just getting a start in Greece; much humanitarian activity is carried on by upper-class women of

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

178 727 669 166 World War II and the guerrilla war which followed constituted another major social upheaval. Whereas the Nazi forces often wreaked vengeance for sabotage upon settlements close to the main thoroughfares, the Communist forces stayed away from the main highways and brought disaster to mountain villages, such as Valtetsi in the Peloponnesos (Chapter 6). All countries occupied by an enemy suffer social as well as economic disorganization, but the case of Greece was aggravated by the nature of the guerrilla war. In order to protect the exposed rural people and to curb the unwilling (and sometimes willing) support of the Communist forces by the villagers upon whom the guerrillas descended for food and supplies, the central government in Athens removed a number of villagers, estimated at from 700,000 to 750,000, from their homes to quarters near some town or city. Because this was a temporary resettlement, most of the villagers did [657] not become incorporated into the local economy, which was not able to utilize such a volume of labor; instead, these migrants were supported by government subsidy which provided a bare minimum of services. But, as [369] earlier chapters have shown, this exposure of from one to two years to the city had a profound psychological impact upon the women and young people. The women learned that there was an "easier" life; the young people got many new ideas about dress and beauty aids, entertainment, types of indoor jobs, and patterns of greater independence from their parents. One girl who had worked in a factory in Salonica felt ashamed to carry water when she went back to her village, and moreover she wanted a regular income.

[831] [302] According to a prominent Greek child-welfare worker, the changes following the guerrilla war ranged from shifts in such basic values as virginity, with this being less highly esteemed than before the war, to the presence of bobbed hair and permanents in villagers where they had never been seen before. Before the war, such changes had been gradual; now they came suddenly. George Sakellopoulos, the inspector of agriculture in Ioannina, summarized very clearly the impact of this population displacement for his area:

[515] During the guerrilla war the people had to go to the towns. They lived in homes much better than they had known before. They learned to wash themselves, which many had not done before. When they were persuaded to go back to their villages, they took back the changes they had seen. Many of them went back reluctantly. While they were refugees they had a subsidy. When that was [657] cut off, they could no longer remain in the town house, for they could not pay the owner, who could kick them out. A free distribution of flour was made in the village, and not in the town, so they had to go back to the village to receive it. Then the tractor operators said they would plow only the fields of those who were actually in the village; even the army helped with the plowing. At first, there were some who stayed behind in the towns because their children were in school, but eventually the families were brought together again in the village.

2:Friedl E-5 (1955-1959)#3 EH1 Greece EH1
Vasilika

planting that season accepted the fact with resignation. The agitation died down after several days and the matter was not mentioned again.

Let us return now to the other officials and organizations that have responsibilities concerning the village as a whole. Law enforcement in Vasilika is in the hands of two *aghrofilakes* (rural policemen). They are appointed by the nomarch and are responsible for preventing and detecting animal trespass in the fields and thefts of produce as well as of personal property. They also watch sales of cotton and tobacco and can therefore furnish information of value for estimating produce taxes. The village police are sometimes called in to deal with disorderly conduct or with any physical violence which threatens to become serious. The *aghrofilakes* wear grey uniforms with green trim and are easily distinguished from the other villagers. Vasilika's police used to be *kseni* (strangers) who came from two different neighboring villages, but in 1961 the men were natives of the village who were relatives of the then current president.

There are two other semigovernmental village-wide organizations: the agricultural cooperative credit society, and the welfare committee. The villagers elect a president of the credit society, whose signature is necessary on almost all requests for credit, since the Agricultural Bank works in conjunction with the cooperative. The village priest, the president of the council, and the president of the agricultural credit society constitute the welfare committee. They attest to the financial need of a villager who wishes to avail himself of free government welfare services. In most cases, however, the village families who occasionally need help receive irregular gifts of food and clothing from other village families, and their plight is not considered a matter for joint village action. When several cartons of surplus American butter, cheese, and powdered milk reached the village, it was the priest who distributed the goods. On that occasion, the daughter of one of the recipients brought some butter (which the villagers usually do not use in cooking or baking) to a neighbor's daughter, who contributed eggs, flour, and sugar. The two girls spent a busy afternoon mixing a cake according to a half-remembered recipe given them by an extension worker some years before. The cake was not a success by any standards for such confections, but the girls were satisfied because they had produced a European-style sweet.

The Village School

The village school is supervised and controlled by the Ministry of Education in Athens. The teacher is appointed by the ministry, which also prescribes the curriculum. In Vasilika, in 1955–1956, the school had thirty pupils distributed unevenly among the six grades. The first grade had the largest number of children because its ranks were augmented by the children of the shepherds, some of whom had had no previous schooling and were assigned to the first grade regardless of age. A man originally from the Peloponnesus taught the children. He had married a woman from Parori, who was herself one of the

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

created as it were out of nothing. Everywhere these institutions were hastily improvised in the face of desperate and clamorous necessity, and, more often than not, maintained with a heroic disregard for the universal lack of material resources, and a courage worthy of a St. Vincent de Paul.

In almost every diocese the bishop bore a heavy responsibility in this work of relief. Nearly always he exercised a close personal supervision over the various institutions which had come into being in response to the need of a people driven, for the second time within less than ten years, from their homes and lands; over the *estia* where for several years milk was distributed daily to thousands of refugee children; the *paidikos stathmos* where infants were cared for during the day; the distribution of clothing, black stuff for cassocks, soap, cocoa, macaroni, beans, sugar, boots and shoes—all the multiplicity of urgently needed supplies with which a host of relief organisations, societies, British and American towns and villages, and private benefactors sought to succour the people of Greece in their distress.

At Siderokastro, for example, the Metropolitan (who as assistant bishop of Salonica was an ardent supporter of the work of the Near East Foundation during the period between the wars), founded a small hospital where poor families could receive free medical attention, as well as a remarkable school of housekeeping for girls of marriageable age. Like all the Macedonian 'despots', the Bishop was president of the local branch of the national relief organisation known as P.I.K.P.A., and supervised the two centres from which milk and cocoa were issued daily to thousands of refugee children from the villages of his diocese.

At Edessa, in western Macedonia, the Metropolitan founded, shortly after the end of the occupation, an orphanage for twenty-five boys. This was originally situated in a house on the outskirts of the town, but during the heavy fighting at Epiphany, 1949—when Naoussa, a few kilometres to the southward, was sacked by the Communists and more than 600 of its inhabitants carried away captive to the mountains —this building was extensively damaged and rendered almost uninhabitable. The Bishop then established his orphans under the care of a monk in a dilapidated Turkish house next to the metropolis, and this was subsequently transformed into a permanent orphanage. Not content with this, the Bishop proceeded to found two further orphanages attached to nearby monasteries, as soon as the district was sufficiently tranquil

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
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727 flickered within the church. Leaving the saints to their solitary vigil we plunged deeper into the uninhabited wastes that stretched southward toward Metsovo and the Thebaid of Staghi.

During the course of the next four days we worked our way eastwards to Trikomon and Kipouryio, and then turned north towards Mavranaioi and Grevena, to complete the first part of my itinerary. At three of the villages on our route there were isolated garrisons: otherwise the whole district lay abandoned. We passed through hamlet after hamlet where every house was destroyed, where churches stood open to the skies and no living creature broke the three-year silence. At Kipouryio the chapel [669] of St. Paraskeve—a saint whose apparent connexion with the sixth day [346] of the week (in Greek, *paraskew*, the day of preparation) has given rise [776] to some very singular local cults in the country districts—had been stripped of its furnishings and turned into a hospital by the Communists: empty bottles and boxes which had contained medical supplies lay strewn about the building.

[657] Upon our return to Grevena we encountered a vast multitude of ragged children straggling back towards the refugee camp, grasping huge slabs of bread and honey: more than 4,000 children were being fed daily at the *estia* outside the high school. We found the Lord Theokletos a little concerned lest I should have fallen into the hands of the *katsapliades*—communications in the mountains out beyond Mavranaioi were notoriously unreliable. I waded through the mud 484 with my captain from Volos to call on the colonel of the local militia, under whose protection I should be travelling for the rest of my itinerary. There was no news to be had anywhere save of the forthcoming elections.

At ten o'clock the following morning we were making slow progress westwards through melting snow: four militiamen, the president of the village of Elatos and myself; a large American mule floundering astern with the baggage. Above the ruins of Doxaras we turned aside to view 727 the pile of stones which was all that remained of the church of St. 346 George. A few families had returned to this hamlet and were living in nissen huts on the hillside below the ruined church. The whole village had been destroyed.

An hour later we found ourselves among the newly built cottages of Elatos. Above a cluster of wretched *kalyvai* rose the fabric of an unfinished church. The village, the president told us, had been burned down in July, 1942, and reduced to ruins. The work of rebuilding was begun

6: McNeill H-5 (1947, 1956) 1957
EH1 Greece EH1
Kotta

[Hill Villages]

727 621 example. I even saw two fine Swiss watches on the wrists of young men dressed in homespun.

[571] [657] In the immediate postwar period, Kotta benefited somewhat from government help. The villagers were given glass to repair the windows of their houses, and some lumber for doors and window frames, so that their houses are in better repair today [491] than in 1947. In 1954 a stout stone bridge was built across the stream with government funds, and the villagers made a rude road to connect Kotta with the outside world. Vehicles can therefore come into the village, though few come, since the villagers have little need of anything from beyond their own small valley.

[241] [233] Their agriculture is much the same as before, with corn almost the sole crop. The village flock of sheep is slowly growing back to prewar proportions, thanks in part to the government's having given each family four sheep as a start. The [492] village also has a few cattle – another government gift – which not only yield milk but are harnessed to the plows as well. All this represents a return to familiar patterns.

x 178 241 233 [242] The only agricultural innovation that has so far come to Kotta is the experimental sowing of alfalfa on one of the good acres of bottom land. This measure was recommended to the village by a government extension agent in the hope of remedying one of the crying weaknesses of its traditional economy – the lack of winter fodder for animals. Leaves cut from trees and dried cornstalks have been normal winter fare for cattle and sheep; and since the village stands more than two thousand feet above sea level, the winter is both long and severe. As a result the animals emerge thin and weak from the winter months. Yet the villagers are not altogether convinced that the new crop is worth while. Alfalfa was planted for the first time in 1955, and while it did help to feed the cattle, the new crop occupied one of the best pieces of bottom land the village possesses, where

6: McNeill H-5 (1947, 1956) 1957
EH1 Greece EH1
Cherasia

[Hill Villages]

669 722 [727] too, burned some houses, including those belonging to the three "rich" families of the community. These had fled to Volos, together with some other families from the village. The people who remained were inclined to support the guerrillas. The guerrillas,

About two weeks after my visit in 1947, the army evacuated all the remaining inhabitants of Cherasia to Volos. There they remained in refugee quarters for two and a half years. The last guerrilla band disappeared from Mount Pelion only in 1950, some six months after the main guerrilla army in the north had retreated across the Albanian frontier. It was therefore late in 1950 before the inhabitants of Cherasia were allowed – or compelled – to return to their village.

727 653 [657] [233] Government authorities were, however, well aware of the difficulties that confronted the community. The returned refugees were given every help to re-establish themselves. They received, gratis, 238 sheep to serve as a nucleus for their flock, as well as materials for the reconstruction of their houses, most of which had suffered damage. Officials issued seed and implements as well. A comprehensive work relief program was set up; for about two years after their return, the men of Cherasia received wages for working on projects that directly benefited their community. In this fashion the new road over the mountain was built – shortening the way to Volos by nearly half. [346] [312] Similarly, new and very handsome school and church buildings were constructed; and pipes from the spring in the upper village brought fresh water into lower Cherasia for the first time. This was vital if the population was to remain in the lower village the year around, since water had previously been unavailable there in summer. Another side of the government policy was to give no help toward reconstruction of the village of upper Cherasia – perched, as it was, high on the mountain beyond the reach of roads. No doubt the authorities in this fashion hoped to tie the villagers to the accessible lower village, and

6: McNeill H-5 (1947, 1956) 1957
EH1 Greece EH1
Cherasia
[Hill Villages]

badly needs reforestation, and that in the long run everyone, including the people of Cherasia, will benefit from re-establishment of real forests on Mount Pelion, carry any weight among the woodcutters who feel that their rights have been ruthlessly disregarded, and their traditional way of life endangered. They do not care to be farmers, and for all their ragged poverty, despise such slavish souls as are content to labor long and hard on the land.

A deep and painful irony lies in the fact that without the bureaucratic paternalism of the government most of the people of Cherasia would, in all probability, have died during the guerrilla war. What happened in Kotta, where the arm of the government did not reach, might well have happened also in Cherasia, if the inhabitants of the village had not been evacuated to Volos in 1947 and fed there – however miserably – for two and a half years by government relief. And if the population of the village had shrunk to one third of what it actually was in 1956, then it does not seem improbable that much of the present bitterness would have dissolved, because then something like the free traditional way of life would have been possible again. Governmental intervention between 1947 and 1950 prevented the operation of the brutal old-fashioned remedy for overpopulation; but governmental intervention since 1950 has not yet sufficed (and seems unlikely to suffice in the future) to provide a tolerable life for the population that has so successfully been preserved from famine, disease and violent death.

The official records of Cherasia were in considerable confusion in 1956, and I was not able to secure satisfactory figures on the present and past population of the village. The main reason for this state of affairs is that many families are registered as inhabitants of Cherasia, but do not reside there. When the villagers were sent back to their homes, everyone was supposed to go, and officially everyone did. Actually, about twenty-five

6: McNeill H-5 (1947, 1956) 1957
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with the farmers seemed to be genuinely friendly and highly effective in nearly all of the villages I visited. Here again, the American aid mission was entitled to a great deal of credit, for American advisers had made special efforts to reorganize the agricultural extension service on the model of the county agricultural agents in the United States. Many of the Greek agriculturalists had been sent to study in America before receiving their appointments. The public health agencies were another branch of the central administration in which a spirit of service had come to prevail; and there may have been others. In general, it was the older departments of the government, and particularly those concerned with money and taxes, in which the unpleasant but traditional attitudes were most firmly and universally established.

Another administrative change, and one which produced highly beneficial results in some localities at least, was the reinvigoration of local government. During the war and afterward, until 1951, local government officials were appointed through the Ministry of Interior. In 1951, however, local elections were organized, partly at least in response to repeated urging from Americans. As a result of these elections, village presidents and city mayors, together with advisory councils which assisted them in their administration, became more nearly independent of the central government, and commanded, presumably, more local confidence and support than was likely to be the case when the offices were filled by appointment from above.

The system did not always work smoothly – witness Cherasia; but my impression of the local officials whom I met in 1956 was on the whole a quite favorable one. Except in Cherasia, the village presidents seemed to have the full confidence of the villagers, and some of them were men of real intelligence and force of character. The president of Old Corinth would be